

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

By Ellen Leahy

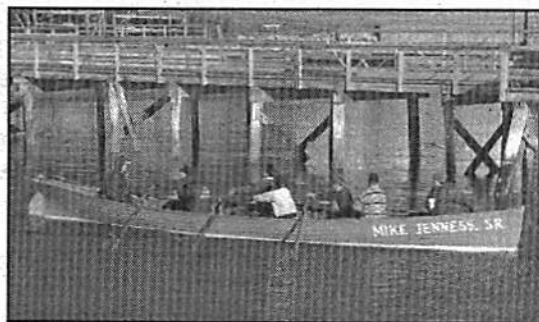
Row, Row, Row the Big Boats

The first time I encountered the Cornish Pilot Gigs was on a March Sunday in 2000. I was out on the bay for a test drive in the only boat I've ever known who was a he, "Slim Pickins". I remember thinking how exhilarating it was to be on the water in winter, especially because the basin was clear of crafts.

As I glanced over the water to Clarks, I thought I saw something coming towards us out of the last century. It looked like a couple of longboats with several oarsmen making their way to our harbor. I thought, is this another one of those pesky Irish vision things, or smugglers perhaps? And then I thought, who would be out on the water on such a gloomy day (present company excluded)? But the boats a kept a coming. It was like seeing an old painting of the sea come to life before your eyes.

I continued to watch these two longboats as they rowed into the boat ramp, and then, a group of people worked together to trailer them. Over the course of the next couple of years, I would see them around the harbor, or in the bay, but still I was not quite sure of their fit, until I met Jenny DeFreitas through the Duxbury Art Association.

Jenny is a ceramist who grew up in town, but now lives in Plymouth. She teaches at the DAA among other endeavors, but more importantly, she has become an avid rower.



spends a lot of time in the zone. The Patriot's were in the zone during their last drive in the super bowl. I once saw Sting(er) in concert at Saratoga's Shell during a raging lightning storm from the lawn = very zone.

On March 2, Team Saquish will be entering their namesake in Hull's Snow Row. They have a woman's team, which includes a male cox, who had been training last spring and summer to compete in England at the "Great River Race" which is 25 miles on the Thames. Our team was slated to fly over the pond on September 12th, 2001. This obviously did not happen for national security reasons, which was a blow to the team as they had been in serious training mode. They have maintained a rigorous training routine, and plan on the Thames in 2002, which by the by, they are in need of sponsorship dollars. It is a neat event that was started to renew the tradition of watermen on London's river and our boat is only one of two from the USA.

year ago when she attended the "Snow Row", a day of competition on the water that is about to take place again on Saturday March 2nd in Hull. The race, which is sponsored by the Hull Lifesaving Museum, is 3 and 3/4 miles long with a 'LeMans' style start at high noon.

Well, after Snow Row 2001, Jenny started showing up in Snug Harbor on Sundays at 8 am, which is where and when other rowers for the Cornish Pilot Gigs would appear. The group is called "Team Saquish", and they row three handsome wooden boats. The first is Saquish which is a green that I would term English racing green from my English sports car days. The "Mike Jenness Sr" is a cornflower type blue and the "W.G. Tucke" is maroon. The first two are 32 feet long and carry six oarsmen and a coxswain (AKA coxs), while the "Tucker" is a downsized gig for four oarsman plus the coxs.

Back to Jenny, whose athletic endeavors had included such activities as rock climbing, x-country, snow boarding and kayaking. What really grabbed her with this sport was the teamwork. She was still involved with the wilds, but now there was the added challenge of working within a group. The Maritime school's crew instructors had mentioned this before I ever got into a shell, and then, I experienced it for myself. There is something very special about functioning with fellow humans as a well-oiled machine. It can be quite hypnotic, as Jenny put it, "the rhythm of the rowing, the sound of the boat... it's like the tic toc of a clock." When it comes together one flows in balance with nature, with the equipment, with one's teammates and oneself. I call this the zone. Michael Jordan

has decided to enter this same England-bound group in the Snow Row 2002. This race's attendees will include an English team, who had shipped their boat over last year. Our home team will consist of this article's heroine Jenny, Pine Dubois, Karin Kaczorowski, Anita Laico-Hurley, Peggy Woll, a ringer and Steve Woll who will function as their coxswain.

Dig this, these people train twelve months of the year through all types of weather, light, currents and tides. The Great River Thames bound team rows together a minimum of three times a week. They dress in layers and carry life jackets, plenty of water and maybe some protein bars or gorp. The oars themselves are custom made in England and are much lighter than they look. The gigs can go about 10 to 11 knots depending on the crew, the wind and the tides.

Mike Jenness is president of the club and can be found at the harbor most Sundays at 8 am. For more information on how to get to the Snow Row or on Team Saquish, please contact Cathy or Mike at 508-378-9986. This is also the number to call if you would like to help sponsor "The Great River Race on the Thames". You can be a part of some positive world competition here, so don't hesitate. Make the call.

This group can also fill a couple of boats with its youth edition, which is guided by Jan Reddy. I find it amazing to see what this father and son started with the desire to try their hands at a little boat building. I may have some of my dates mixed up, but not the 2002 'Snow Row' on March 2nd at noon. Try to check it out or drop by Snug on a Sunday morn sometime soon. You are welcome.